

**Wildlife Committee Meeting
February 5, 2016
Commission Room**

I. Update Item:

The Wildlife Division will provide a brief update on the following items:

- 2015 Experimental Teal Season
- 2015-2016 Regular Waterfowl seasons

II. Discussion Item: Season Dates (no bag limit changes proposed)

Doves-

Dates:	September 1 – October 26, 2016
	November 24 – December 4, 2016
	Dec. 17, 2016 - January 8, 2017

Other Webless Species-

Rails and Gallinules:	September 1 – November 9, 2016
Wilson's snipe:	September 16 – October 25, 2016
	November 26 – January 31, 2017
Sandhill Crane:	December 17, 2016 – January 15, 2017

Early Season Ducks-

Wood duck and teal:	September 17 – 21, 2016
Teal Only:	September 22-25, 2016

Late Season Ducks, Mergansers and Coot-

Dates:	November 24 – November 27, 2016
	December 5, 2016 – January 29, 2017

Youth Waterfowl Seasons-

Eastern Zone:	November 5 - November 6, 2016
Western Zone:	February 4 - February 5, 2017

III. Discussion Item: Changes to the Canada goose seasons

Justification: The Mississippi Flyway Council recently completed a new management plan for Canada Geese in the Flyway. This new management plan was approved by the USFWS this past November. The new plan allows for significant changes to Kentucky's Canada goose seasons. To better understand how Kentucky's goose hunters would support options for changes, the Wildlife Division assembled a collection of dedicated goose hunters from across the state. These hunters include representatives from Ducks

Unlimited, the League of Kentucky Sportsmen, a world champion goose caller and a retriever club president. The average person in this group spent more than 15 days goose hunting last season. They were presented with options under the new management plan and they recommended two changes in season dates:

September: Under previous management plans, Kentucky was limited to a September 1 – September 15 Framework for hunting geese in September. The Wildlife Division frequently was asked by hunters if it would be possible to move the goose season so that it coincided with September duck seasons. Under the old plan, this move was not possible. Under the new Management Plan, Kentucky may hunt Canada geese on any day in September. Harvest of Canada geese in September is entirely birds that were born in Kentucky. September harvest represents 40% of the harvest of all Kentucky born Canada goose harvest. The Wildlife Division has concerns that increasing number of days in September could negatively impact our population, but we are not concerned that a shift in the 2 weeks that allows hunting would impact populations. When asked, our goose hunting panel overwhelmingly supported the idea of moving the season from September 1-15 to September 16-30. The panel felt hunting later in the month would; increase likelihood silage fields had been harvested thus increasing the number of quality hunting spots, decrease conflict with the dove season opener, decrease conflict with deer archery season opener, and provide the opportunity to shoot ducks and geese together.

February: The framework closure date for Canada geese was January 31st under the previous management plans. The Wildlife Division frequently hears from hunters asking about the possibility of hunting waterfowl later than we currently do. Under the new management plan, Kentucky has the opportunity to hunt Canada geese as late as February 15th. While we have concerns about adding additional days in September, we have less concerns about adding days in February. Harvest of Canada geese in Kentucky in January is traditionally > 50% geese born outside of Kentucky. These include the migrant “interior” populations (Southern James Bay and Mississippi Valley Populations) and “temperate nesting geese” from places like Ohio, Illinois, Ontario and Michigan. These birds born outside Kentucky will likely “buffer” the impact of two additional weeks on Kentucky born geese.

Proposed Dates: September 15 – September 30, 2016
November 24, 2016 – February 15, 2017

IV. Discussion Item: Snow goose, white-fronted goose and brant seasons

Justification: With the expansion of Canada goose seasons into February, the Wildlife Division recommends having a concurrent late season for all goose species. Kentucky had currently not been taking advantage of all the days possible to hunt white-fronted and snow geese.

Proposed Dates: November 24, 2016 – February 15, 2017

V. Discussion Item: Snow goose conservation order season dates

Justification: The Snow Goose Conservation Order Season is a special season created by the USFWS with the idea of reducing continental populations of snow geese. High populations have had deleterious effects on the high arctic breeding grounds of this species. The Conservation order season allows hunters to hunt without limits and to use

electronic calls. Harvest of snow geese is doubled each season over those shot during traditional seasons. Unfortunately, this increased harvest is still not enough to cause any impact to snow goose populations. Under the rules of the Conservation Order Season, this special season may not occur while any other migratory bird seasons are open. If Kentucky were to increase the season length for Canada geese, then we would have to delay the open of the Conservation Order Season. We recommend delaying the open of the Conservation Order Season to February 16th to take advantage of the opportunity to hunt Canada geese. In most seasons, this later open would still allow hunters to pursue snow geese during their peak movement thru Kentucky. Last season, 233 people participated in the Conservation Order season.

VI. Discussion Item: Falconry waterfowl season dates

Justification: The maximum number of days allowed during any hunting season on migratory birds is 107 days under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In past years, exposure of Canada geese to gun hunting was significantly less than 107 days. Because of that, falconry waterfowl seasons could start ~20 days before gun seasons. With the addition of 15 gun hunting days in February, the number of Falconry only days would need to be reduced. With September Canada goose seasons (16 days), the November-February Canada goose season (84 days) and youth waterfowl season (2 days) Canada geese would be exposed to 102 days of gun hunting during the 2016-2017 season. While it would be possible to add 5 days of falconry only this season, the number of days would change each season due to calendar shifts. Because of the confusion this creates, we recommend having Falconry Waterfowl Season start with gun seasons on Thanksgiving Day each season.

Proposed Dates: November 24, 2016 – February 15, 2017

VII. Discussion Item: Take of geese by adults participating in youth waterfowl season

Justification: Current youth waterfowl season regulations specify that the adult accompanying the youth may not hunt waterfowl. They may hunt other species for which there is an open season. If the Commission extends goose hunting into February, we recommend modifying this regulation to remove the “may not hunt waterfowl” portion. This would allow hunters in the Western Zone to take of geese as a species for which there would now be an open season.

VIII. Discussion Item: Create a split in the American woodcock season

Justification: The League of Kentucky Sportsmen passed a resolution in 2015 asking KDFWR to consider implementing a split season for American woodcock. The USFWS frameworks allow for one split, and changes to that split are not required to fall within the same “open Season on Splits” they require us to maintain for doves and waterfowl. Therefore, the Commission could decide to create a split season. The Wildlife Division has no concerns about the impact of changes to the season on woodcock populations. The Wildlife Division has mailed a survey to 550 people who identify themselves as woodcock hunters asking for their preference on season timing. We do not have the results of that survey at the time of this Wildlife Committee meeting but will in time for a Commission decision in March. Options provided to hunters are below.

- A. Leave current season timing in place (November 1 – December 15)
- B. Move season to start the 4th Saturday in October (October 22 – December 5)
- C. Create a split season which closes woodcock hunting (16 days) during modern gun deer season based on the longest zone (Zone 1). (October 22 – November 11) and (November 28 - December 21)
- D. Create a split season which closes woodcock hunting (10 days) during deer season based on the shortest zone (Zone 4 counties). (October 22 – November 11) and (November 22 - December 15)

IX. Discussion Item: Allow “No Hunt” option on waterfowl quota hunts

Justification: The KDFWR Commission voted to allow the “No Hunt Option” for deer hunters applying for quota hunts on WMAs. This “No Hunt Option” allowed a hunter that would not be able to hunt that season to still put in for the quota hunt and maintain preference points without the chance of being drawn. The Wildlife Division has heard from numerous duck hunters asking for a similar option for waterfowl quota hunts at Ballard WMA and Sloughs WMA. The Wildlife Division supports the idea of making this option available to quota hunts across all species.

X. Discussion Item: Require HIP Verification for all migratory bird hunters

Justification: The KDFWR Commission voted to establish a new way of collecting Harvest Information Program (HIP) data for the 2015-2016 season. At that point, the Wildlife Division asked that no citations be issued in the first year while hunters were learning the new system. At the close of the 2015-2016 season, almost 40,000 hunters have registered for HIP. In conversations with the USFWS, the quality of data being collected far exceeds that available from Kentucky in the past. In conversations with a number of KDFWR Law Enforcement Captains, the compliance among field checked hunters has been extremely high. Most described compliance as being greater than 90%. With a successful year for everyone to adapt to the new system, the Wildlife Division recommends enacting a regulation that compels compliance.

XI. Discussion Item: Close Ballard WMA to hunting on Christmas Eve

Justification: The Ballard WMA staff has asked to close Ballard and Boatwright WMA's to hunting on Christmas Eve. Currently the WMA is closed for Christmas Day and New Year's Day. By having Christmas Eve off, it would be possible for staff to travel to family holiday events. With only Christmas day off, staff is largely unable to attend family functions outside the area. All other state employees are granted Christmas Eve as a vacation day. Because the day is a state holiday, working this day causes staff to acquire paid overtime and Comp time. By the end of the season, this time is a significant cost burden to the Wildlife Division.

XII. Discussion Item: Close Crenshaw and Duncan Tracts 2 days each week

Justification: The Crenshaw and Duncan tracts at Sloughs WMA are quota hunt blinds which are drawn on a daily basis. Most hunters utilizing these blinds travel from outside the area to hunt. Currently, these sites are hunted 7 days a week. Because of the hunting pressure and lack of ability to deliver water; these sites currently provide a low quality hunting opportunity. With the work being done at these sites under our NAWCA grant, water delivery will increase greatly. Additionally, Sloughs staff believes we can

considerably increase the quality of hunts by allowing a couple of rest (non-hunting) days. Rest days allow waterfowl time to discover food resources and become comfortable utilizing a site. Scientific literature demonstrates the positive impacts on hunt quality following rest days. At our Ballard WMA, which also institutes rest days, the day after rest days are some of the most sought after days by hunters. The staff at Sloughs WMA has worked to establish several more blind sites on the Crenshaw and Duncan tracts which can be included with current blind sites to increase the number of blinds being hunted each day which would offset some of the lost opportunity.

XIII. Discussion Item: Modification of 301 KAR 2:095, Importation of cervid carcasses and parts.

- Provide processors the same protection as taxidermist regarding the importation of illegal carcass parts
- Allow processors and taxidermist to accept the spinal column as acceptable parts
- Prohibit the importation of cervid carcasses and the infectious carcass parts from CWD positive Canadian Provinces.

Justification: Currently, taxidermists are allowed to accept intact skulls from CWD positive areas if they adhere to reporting the animal to KDFWR and provide the hunter's information. The same privilege should be extended to processors to prevent illegally imported animals to be disposed of improperly, which could potentially expose our deer and elk herd within the state. Taxidermist and processors also need to be allowed to accept the entire carcass as many animals are imported whole, which is of greater risk than the skull. Finally, the same restrictions regarding importation of carcass parts that apply to CWD positive states need to apply to carcasses or carcasses parts from CWD positive Canadian provinces.

XIV. Discussion Item: Modification of 301 KAR 2:132, Elk quota hunts.

- Create a 3 year mandatory sit out period for all drawn hunters

Justification: Recent surveys from a variety of elk applicants and elk hunters indicate a willingness to require a 3 year sit out period for all drawn hunters, regardless of the permit type. Survey respondents were all in favor of the current 3 year sit out period for drawn bull hunters and data indicates they were also supportive of the same sit out period for cow hunters.